

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
SOUTHEASTERN DIVISION**

RONALD DALE BURSTON, JR.,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 1:12CV29 LMB
	)	
DANIEL SMITH,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff (registration no. 513412), an inmate at Northeast Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee [Doc. #3]. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that the plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$1.00. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, after reviewing the complaint, the Court will partially dismiss the complaint and will order the Clerk to issue process or cause process to be issued on the non-frivolous portions of the complaint.

**28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess

and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. *Id.*

Plaintiff has filed a document stating that he has attempted to obtain a certified copy of his prison account statement but that the officials have refused to provide him with one. When a prisoner is unable to provide the Court with a certified copy of his prison account statement, the Court should assess an amount "that is reasonable, based on whatever information the court has about the prisoner's finances." Henderson v. Norris, 129 F.3d 481, 484 (8th Cir. 1997). Based upon plaintiff's insistence that he currently is lacking in funds and is pursuing several cases in this Court at the same time, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$1.00.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Court notes that in an earlier case before this Court, plaintiff filed a certified copy of his prison account statement that showed an average monthly deposit of \$143.33 and an average monthly balance of \$104.08. See Burston v. Missouri Dept. of Corr., 1:11CV221 HEA (E.D. Mo.). In that case, the Court assessed an initial partial filing fee of \$28.67 which plaintiff has paid.

## **28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it “lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact.” Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff’d 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at

1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff's conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. *Id.* at 1950, 51-52.

### **The Complaint**

Plaintiff, an inmate at Northeast Correctional Center, brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against an employee of the Missouri Department of Corrections, Daniel Smith, a correctional officer. Plaintiff asserts that defendant Smith intentionally violated his privacy and initiated violence against him by other inmates by telling others that he was infected by HIV, which caused other inmates to threaten plaintiff and beat him. Plaintiff states that defendant Smith engaged in systematic verbal abuse against him, causing him daily stress, shame and humiliation, and placing him in danger of attack from other inmates, in violation of the Eighth Amendment. Plaintiff also asserts that defendant acted in violation of the Missouri Aids Confidentiality Act by informing others of his HIV status.

Plaintiff names Daniel Smith in both his individual and official capacity, and he seeks both monetary and injunctive relief.

### **Discussion**

Plaintiff's claims against Daniel Smith in his individual capacity for violations of the Eighth Amendment and the Missouri Aids Confidentiality Act state a claim for relief under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

Plaintiff's claim against the Daniel Smith in his official capacity is subject to dismissal because naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official, in this case the State of Missouri. Will v. Michigan Dept. of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). “[N]either a State nor its officials acting in their official capacities are ‘persons’ under § 1983.” Id. As such, plaintiff cannot maintain an official capacity claim against defendant Smith.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #3] is **GRANTED**.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$1.00 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to “Clerk, United States District Court,” and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that if plaintiff fails to pay the initial partial filing fee within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order, then this case will be dismissed without prejudice.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint as to defendant Daniel Smith. Defendant shall be served in accordance with the waiver agreement this Court maintains with the Missouri Attorney General's Office.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(g)(2), defendant Daniel Smith shall reply to plaintiff's claims within the time provided by the applicable provisions of Rule 12(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint as to plaintiff's claim against defendant Smith in his official capacity because this claim is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that this case is assigned to Track 5B: Prisoner Standard.

An appropriate Order of Partial Dismissal shall accompany this Memorandum and Order.

Dated this 11th day of May, 2012.



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STEPHEN N. LIMBAUGH, JR.  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE